

A
C H A R G E,
BY JOHN CLAYTON:
A 8,
S E R M O N,
BY BENJAMIN DAVIES, D.D.

WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS,
BY THOMAS TOWLE, B.D.

ALL DELIVERED
ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29, 1791;

AT
THE PUBLIC SEPARATION
OF
THE REV. JAMES KNIGHT,
TO THE
PASTORAL OFFICE
IN THE CHURCH OF WHICH THE LATE
REV. JOHN ROGERS WAS PASTOR.

L O N D O N:
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A N

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

LET ALL THINGS BE DONE DECENTLY, AND IN ORDER.—Such was the language of the Apostle Paul, or rather of the divine Spirit, under whose unerring guidance that eminent servant of the Lord Jesus spake, wrote, and acted. 1 *Cor.* xiv. last verse.

The injunction conveyed in these words was addressed to the church at Corinth, but intended for the direction of all who profess the religion of Christ, in every age, to the end of time. The universal terms in which the exhortation is expressed—Let *all* things—may, perhaps, lead some to consider it in a civil sense, as applicable to the common affairs of life; and had all the professors of Christianity endeavoured to conduct themselves, even in the concerns of trade and commerce, becoming their stations and circumstances, and with a constant regard to that regularity and method which reason and revelation unite to inculcate, many painful events that have lately arisen would not have taken

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place,

place, I mean those affecting bankruptcies, in consequence of which individuals have been impoverished, families ruined, and a profession of religion brought under disgrace.—But, the advice before us is to be understood in a religious sense. Whosoever considers the manner in which the words are introduced and connected, must, I presume, soon see, that, as they were directed to a church of Christ, they had a regard to their conduct respecting worship. I am sensible that the injunction had an immediate reference to the behaviour of the professors to whom it was addressed, with relation to those extraordinary gifts with which many ministers and Christians in the primitive times, and some at Corinth, were honourably distinguished; but, as the words were intended for the professors of Christianity in all places, it is natural to conclude, that they were designed to regulate the deportment of all under this character, with respect to their worship in general. Every one who is acquainted with the history of the religious world must know, that, under the supposed sanction of this passage, many things have been introduced, and continue to be regarded, there, which have no foundation in the word of God; but to any thing of this nature the precept we are considering gives no encouragement—it relates to that, and to that only, which may justly be esteemed worship,

to which it is essential that it be warranted by the declared will of God himself. The time assigned to my part in the present service will not permit that minute discussion of the passage before us, which the extent and importance of its contents certainly deserve: I hope, therefore, you will be satisfied with a brief representation of its general meaning.—When the Apostle says—“ Let every thing be done *decently*”—it is as if he had said, “ See to it, “ that every part of your behaviour in worship “ be free from whatever has a natural tendency “ to lead any to flight and despise your religious “ services, and at the same time adapted to secure that grand end of all sacred institutions, “ the advancement of the divine glory, by the “ spiritual improvement of those who attend “ them.” And when he adds—“ and *in order*,” it is as if he had further said, “ Be equally solicitous to regulate every part of your conduct “ respecting worship, with a most conscientious “ and steady regard to that order which God has “ established in his holy word.”—That this is the general import of the command, an attention to the chapter of which it is the conclusion, must, I presume, convince every serious reader.

Such, then, being the intention and meaning of the precept to which we are attending, shall

I request you, my friends of the church which
 statedly assemble for worship in this place, to
 give evidence that you have regarded this com-
 mand, by representing the steps you have taken
 previous to the transactions of this day?

[*A deputed brother of the church immediately replied:*]

‘ It pleased the great Head of the church,
 ‘ on the 2d of September last, to remove from
 ‘ us by death, after a short illness, our late
 ‘ pastor, whose integrity, simplicity, piety, and
 ‘ steady attachment to the glorious truths of
 ‘ the Gospel, will long be gratefully remem-
 ‘ bered by this church.

‘ Brought by the providence of God into this
 ‘ affecting situation, and sensible, how much our
 ‘ future comfort depended, under the divine
 ‘ blessing, on union and harmony amongst our-
 ‘ selves; we appointed a weekly meeting for
 ‘ prayer, as the means of bringing us often
 ‘ together, and that, in circumstances of all
 ‘ others, best calculated to promote brotherly
 ‘ love.

‘ Children of the same family, bewailing our
 ‘ common loss, our tears cemented us still closer
 ‘ in christian affection, and our hearts became
 ‘ as the heart of one man.

‘ We were regularly supplied by the kind
 ‘ occasional labours of the neighbouring mi-
 ‘ nisters,

‘ nisters, whose readiness to serve us demands
‘ our grateful thanks, until the 12th of Decem-
‘ ber, when the Rev. Mr. Knight first preached
‘ amongst us.

‘ After hearing him for three Lord’s days
‘ with much pleasure, and seeking counsel of
‘ God, we on the 2d of January unanimously
‘ invited him to preach to us statedly for three
‘ months.

‘ On the 16th of January he signified his
‘ compliance with our request.

‘ Continuing to preach at our place with great
‘ acceptance, we on the 28th of February, after
‘ looking up to the Lord for direction, unani-
‘ mously renewed our invitation to him for three
‘ months longer.

‘ On the 22d of March, he agreed to our
‘ second invitation.

‘ Having our minds solemnly impressed with
‘ the importance of the trust committed unto
‘ us, and anxious that the same pure Gospel we
‘ have been so long accustomed to hear in this
‘ place, might be handed down to our dear
‘ children inviolate, we were enabled, we trust,
‘ to commit ourselves as a church into the hands
‘ of the Lord Jesus Christ, to lay hold upon his

' promises for our future supply and settle-
 ' ment; appealing to him for the sincerity and
 ' purity of our views: not desiring one who
 ' would fall in with the corrupted taste of the
 ' times, but one who would not be ashamed of
 ' the Gospel, and be determined to know no-
 ' thing amongst us, save Jesus Christ and him
 ' crucified.

' Following, what we humbly apprehended
 ' to be the voice of God in his providence, on
 ' the 25th of April, after earnest prayer and
 ' supplication, we trust in the fear of the Lord,
 ' and with a single eye to his glory, we unani-
 ' mously called the Rev. Mr. Knight to the
 ' pastoral office over this church.

' On the 22d of May we received his answer,
 ' accepting of the call with great diffidence and
 ' humility.

' On the 30th he was received into commu-
 ' nion with us, by a dismission from the church
 ' under the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. Clay-
 ' ton, when we recognised his call to be our
 ' minister.

' Brought, by the good hand of our God
 ' upon us, to the solemn transaction of this day,
 ' we would, as from an eminence, survey the
 ' way

‘ way we have lately travelled. It was a road
 ‘ we had not gone heretofore. It was a path
 ‘ full of danger. It has proved so to many
 ‘ churches. Whilst we would adore the good-
 ‘ ness and mercy of the Lord in again giving us
 ‘ a pastor, we would not be unthankful for the
 ‘ way in which he has given him.

‘ We do earnestly solicit the affectionate pray-
 ‘ ers of our sister churches, that we may stand
 ‘ fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving to-
 ‘ gether for the faith of the Gospel.’

Most truly do I thank you, my worthy friend,
 for the distinct representation you have now
 given. The whole was pleasing, but some par-
 ticulars were received with peculiar pleasure. The
 honourable notice taken of your late pastor, that
 truly upright man, and faithful minister—The
 caution used as to the preachers admitted into
 the pulpit, during the vacancy—The harmony
 maintained among you while destitute of a
 pastor—The manner in which you conducted
 yourselves when a candidate presented; your
 proceedings were neither too slow nor too hasty
 —and, particularly the devout regard you paid
 to the divinely glorious Head of the church, who
 has now, I trust, kindly appeared for you—are
 much to the credit of your sacred society.

On these occasions, it is usual for the church immediately concerned, publicly to recognise their call of the minister they have chosen to the pastoral office among them; it is my desire, therefore, that you, the brethren of this church, will avow the invitation you have given to my worthy brother, by lifting up your hands.

[Accordingly this request was immediately complied with.]

The precept to which our attention has now been directed, was intended to be regarded by ministers of the Gospel, as well as by Christians in private stations. The church of Christ, who has called us together, on this solemn occasion, having manifested their attention to its sacred contents, I shall now request you, my Reverend Brother, who concurred with the church in requesting our attendance at this time, to show your regard to it also, by favouring us with a relation of the measures you have pursued, which have terminated in the solemnities of this service.

[Immediately Mr. Knight expressed himself in the following manner.]

‘ As so explicit an account has been given by
 ‘ a brother of the church concerning the pro-
 ‘ ceedings

‘ceedings with a view to our union, on their
 ‘side, for me to give you a counterpart
 ‘complete would be to weary you with a num-
 ‘ber of unnecessary repetitions—therefore I have
 ‘only to declare that the steps I have taken suc-
 ‘cessively have been taken with great delibera-
 ‘tion, not without consulting some prudent
 ‘and godly friends, not without frequent sup-
 ‘plications at the throne of grace, and not with-
 ‘out engaging the intercession of others on my
 ‘behalf, that I might be directed into the path
 ‘of duty.’

As truly as I made my grateful acknowledgements to the church for the pleasing representation given by them, do I request you, Sir, to accept my thanks for the equally pleasing narrative received from you.—All was acceptable—but, the great deliberation—the consultation of prudent and godly friends,—with your own frequent supplications at the throne of grace, and engaging the intercession of others on your behalf—so particularly expressed, are peculiarly acceptable; they indicate that disposition of heart, which not only intimates, that you have taken the right path, but gives ground for hope that, by the continual supplies of divine grace, you will be honoured with eminent usefulness in the church of Christ.

As

As the church have this day publicly recognised their invitation of you to become their pastor, it is my request, that you will (as is customary in these services likewise), in the presence of this assembly, testify your consent to take the pastoral oversight of them.

[This Mr. Knight did in the same manner in which the church had avowed their invitation, immediately adding the following words.]

‘ IN a humble dependance upon the grace of
‘ Christ, I do now declare myself willing and
‘ ready to be devoted to the service of this peo-
‘ ple in the Lord, as sustaining the pastoral office,
‘ to which I have been invited so affectionately
‘ and in so solemn a manner.

‘ Now, let me beg an interest in the prayers
‘ of you all who are accustomed to pray in the
‘ name of the Lord Jesus, and in the strength of
‘ his spirit!

‘ Think of the nature of the pastoral office!

‘ Think of the weakness, inexperience and
‘ dangers of youth!

‘ Think of the advantages this church was
‘ bereaved of in the loss of a pastor, whose cha-
‘ racter

‘ racter and conduct so greatly resembled the
 ‘ character and conduct of a primitive Chris-
 ‘ tian !

‘ Let these things move you to be earnest in
 ‘ your supplications to God for this people, and
 ‘ for me their servant in the Lord—that we
 ‘ may be kept in the faith of Christ—that we
 ‘ may be blessed with the light, the strength and
 ‘ the comforts of his spirit,—and thus may be
 ‘ enabled to glorify God, even our Father, in
 ‘ that important union which has now so public
 ‘ a commencement !’

“ To this end ” (said our blessed Saviour)
 “ was I born, and for this cause came I into the
 “ world, that I should bear witness unto the
 “ truth *.” It becomes every one of his disci-
 ples, and, especially, each of his ministers, in this
 instance, to follow his example. Permit me, there-
 fore, (as is the laudable custom, on such days as
 this) to desire you my Reverend Brother, whose
 separation to the pastoral office we are now at-
 tending, to favour us with a declaration of what
 you consider as true and important in a religious
 view.

* John xviii. 37.

[Here

[*Here Mr. Knight replied.*]

‘ In declaring the articles of my faith, I shall
‘ begin from that truth, which is in all respects
‘ the first, the most unquestionable, and of the
‘ greatest importance.

1. ‘ I believe in the existence of God; the
‘ heavens, the earth and the seas bear witness
‘ abundantly to the being of one who is eternal,
‘ powerful, good and wise.

2. ‘ I believe that there is now extant among
‘ men a revelation concerning this one God,
‘ inspired and given by himself, comprehending
‘ all that it is necessary for us to know of his
‘ glorious perfections; and all that it is necessary
‘ for us to know of our own nature, condition
‘ and interests.

3. ‘ I believe that this divine revelation is to
‘ be found complete in that book which is usu-
‘ ally called the Bible, (including both the Old
‘ and New Testament,) and in these writings
‘ only.

4. ‘ But, seeing that many who have the
‘ scriptures in their possession, who read them,
‘ and acknowledge them to be divinely inspired,
‘ do notwithstanding variously and widely differ
‘ in

‘ in their views of the doctrines which they con-
 ‘ tain, I shall proceed to declare with all plain-
 ‘ ness, and with all sincerity (for He that shall
 ‘ judge me is present) what I hold as the main
 ‘ truths revealed in the holy word of God:
 ‘ truths which are the stay of my soul, its
 ‘ strength and rejoicing; truths of which I do
 ‘ most cheerfully avow my belief on this solemn
 ‘ occasion, and which I hope to be publishing,
 ‘ maintaining and defending as long as I live.

5. ‘ In the first place, concerning God, upon
 ‘ the testimony of the scriptures, I believe that
 ‘ he is a Spirit, from everlasting to everlasting,
 ‘ with whom there is no variableness neither
 ‘ shadow of turning; I believe that he is infinite
 ‘ in understanding, all-wise, all-sufficient! that
 ‘ he filleth heaven and earth with his presence,
 ‘ that the heaven, yea the heaven of heavens
 ‘ cannot contain him; I believe in the *holiness*
 ‘ of God that he is light, and that in him is no
 ‘ darkness at all; I believe in the *righteousness* of
 ‘ God, in his goodness, mercy and truth; I be-
 ‘ lieve that God is love.

6. ‘ Again, I believe in God, as the *creator* of
 ‘ all things; I believe that by the *word* of his
 ‘ power all things were created, formed and
 ‘ disposed in that beautiful order which conti-
 ‘ nues unto this day: I believe also that the
 ‘ universe

‘ universe is *upheld* by the word of divine power;
‘ I believe in the sovereignty and government
‘ of the Creator as extending to all the works
‘ of his hands.

7. ‘ I believe that in the creation of this
‘ world the great sovereign of all discovered pe-
‘ culiar attention to *man*; creating him after
‘ his own image in knowledge, righteousness,
‘ and true holiness; and giving him dominion
‘ over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of
‘ the air, and over the cattle and over all the
‘ earth, and over every creeping thing that
‘ creepeth upon the earth.

8. ‘ I believe that God placed his creature
‘ man in circumstances of happiness, but in
‘ circumstances also of probation; commanding
‘ him to abstain from the tree of knowledge of
‘ good and evil upon pain of death: I believe
‘ that our first parents, thus situated, were ap-
‘ pointed the representatives of all their poste-
‘ rity.

9. ‘ I believe that our first parents transgressed
‘ the will of God which had been so expressly
‘ revealed, presuming to eat of the forbidden
‘ tree, and that hereby both they and their pos-
‘ terity were exposed to the avenging wrath of
‘ God as a righteous Judge, and their offended
‘ Sove-

‘ Sovereign. Here, I believe, was the commencement of human depravity; here was the spring of those streams of corruption which flow to the remotest descendants of Adam.

10. ‘ I believe that on this occasion God manifested himself to our first parents as a God who is gracious and merciful no less than as He to whom vengeance belongeth.

11. ‘ I believe that it was not but through a Mediator the grace and mercy of God were manifested.

12. ‘ I believe that this mediator was the only-begotten of the Father; the Word that was in the beginning with God, and was God; being distinct from the person of the Father, yet truly and equally God.—I believe that he was set apart to the mediatorial office by the Father, yet not as considered in his divine nature only, but as united in his Father’s purpose to the nature of man.

13. ‘ I believe it was He who managed the affairs of the church from generation to generation.

14. ‘ I believe that in the fullness of time the Son of God was made manifest—the Word became flesh.

15. ‘ I be-

15. ' I believe in the miraculous conception
' of our Lord Jesus Christ; that he was con-
' ceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by
' the power of the Holy Spirit, and that he
' was only the reputed son of Joseph the car-
' penter.

16. ' I believe that he lived upon earth in
' perfect conformity to the law of God, and
' was in all points obedient to the will of the
' Father who sent him ; so leaving us an exam-
' ple: I believe also that this obedience of Christ
' is imputed unto many for righteousness.

17. ' I believe that by wicked hands our Lord
' Jesus was crucified and slain, yet according to
' the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of
' God ; I believe that by his death on the cross
' he made atonement for sin, undergoing him-
' self that curse which was due unto sinners, and
' so becoming the author of eternal salvation to
' his people.

18. ' I believe in the resurrection of our Lord
' Jesus from the dead; and that by his resur-
' rection his righteousness was manifested, and
' his acceptance with the Father as the surety
' for sinners.

19. ‘ I believe that the Lord Christ is ascend-
ed up on high, and sitteth at the right hand
of

‘ of God, exalted above all creatures in heaven
‘ and earth, invested by the Father with all power
‘ and dominion : I believe in his perpetual in-
‘ tercession for the purchase of his blood.

20. ‘ I believe that, upon his ascension, the
‘ Son of God received of his Father the promise
‘ of the Spirit.

21. ‘ Concerning the Holy Spirit, I believe
‘ that He is truly a Divine Person, and one with
‘ the Father and the Son; willing and perform-
‘ ing those things which are proper to God only.

22. ‘ I believe that He is sent by the Father
‘ and the Son to accomplish the Father’s coun-
‘ sels by applying the work of the Son.

23. ‘ It was He, I believe, who qualified the
‘ apostles of Christ for their office; their gifts
‘ and graces were the gifts and graces of the
‘ Spirit; it was by the power of the Spirit they
‘ preached, wrought miracles and completed
‘ the canon of scripture.

24. ‘ I believe it is to the Spirit of God that
‘ we owe the preservation of his holy word, and
‘ a succession of gospel-ministers, to the present
‘ day.

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25. ‘ I be-

25. ' I believe it is the Spirit of God who
' renders the testimony of Christ, whether it be
' read or preached, effectual to salvation.

26. ' I believe it is through a cordial recep-
' tion of the truth, even through faith which is
' wrought in the heart, that the word becomes
' a word of salvation to the soul.

27. ' I believe that the saving influences of
' the Spirit are communicated to those only
' who were redeemed by the blood of Christ,
' and chosen of the Father from everlasting, but
' that all such are in due time made partakers
' of the Spirit unto eternal life.

28. ' I believe that it is the duty of all whose
' faith is in our Lord Jesus Christ to be zealous
' of good works; and that it is only by keeping
' his commandments we can possibly have assu-
' rance that we abide in him.

29. ' I believe it is incumbent upon each of
' the faithful to unite with his brethren in
' bearing a public testimony to the doctrines of
' Christ, by assembling in his name, (especially
' on the Lord's day,) observing his ordinances,
' and those only which he, as the Head of the
' Church, has enjoined.

30. ' I be-

30. ' I believe it is the duty of such an assembly of Christians to chuse some of their number who may attend to the outward concerns of the church; and one or more of the same faith with themselves to take the oversight of them in the Lord, who may preach, exhort, rebuke, and administer the seals of the covenant.

31. ' I believe that the seals of the covenant are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

32. ' I believe that Baptism is an ordinance of Christ, wherein by washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is signified our union with Christ, and our interest in the benefits of redemption.—I believe that this ordinance is not to be withheld from the infant-seed of the faithful.

33. ' Concerning the Lord's Supper I believe also that this is an ordinance of Christ, and intended for the nourishment of his church; in this believers, by eating bread and drinking wine, do shew forth the death of their Lord as the sacrifice for sin, and declare their expectation of his appearance yet another time without sin unto salvation.

34. ' I believe that all such as die in the Lord
' Jesus, immediately upon the dissolution of the
' body, are present with him in a far better state
' than that of their pilgrimage here upon earth.

35. ' I believe that the wicked do lift up
' their eyes in torments as soon as they quit this
' present state of things.

36. ' I believe in the resurrection of the dead,
' both of the just and of the unjust; that they shall
' be judged according to their deeds; that the
' Lord Christ is appointed to the office of judge.—
' I believe that the wicked shall be turned into
' hell; from whence there shall be no deliver-
' ance.—I do verily believe that the torments of
' the damned will endure for ever and ever!—
' as I believe that the righteous shall enter into
' life everlasting; that their state of glory and
' bliss shall never have an end.

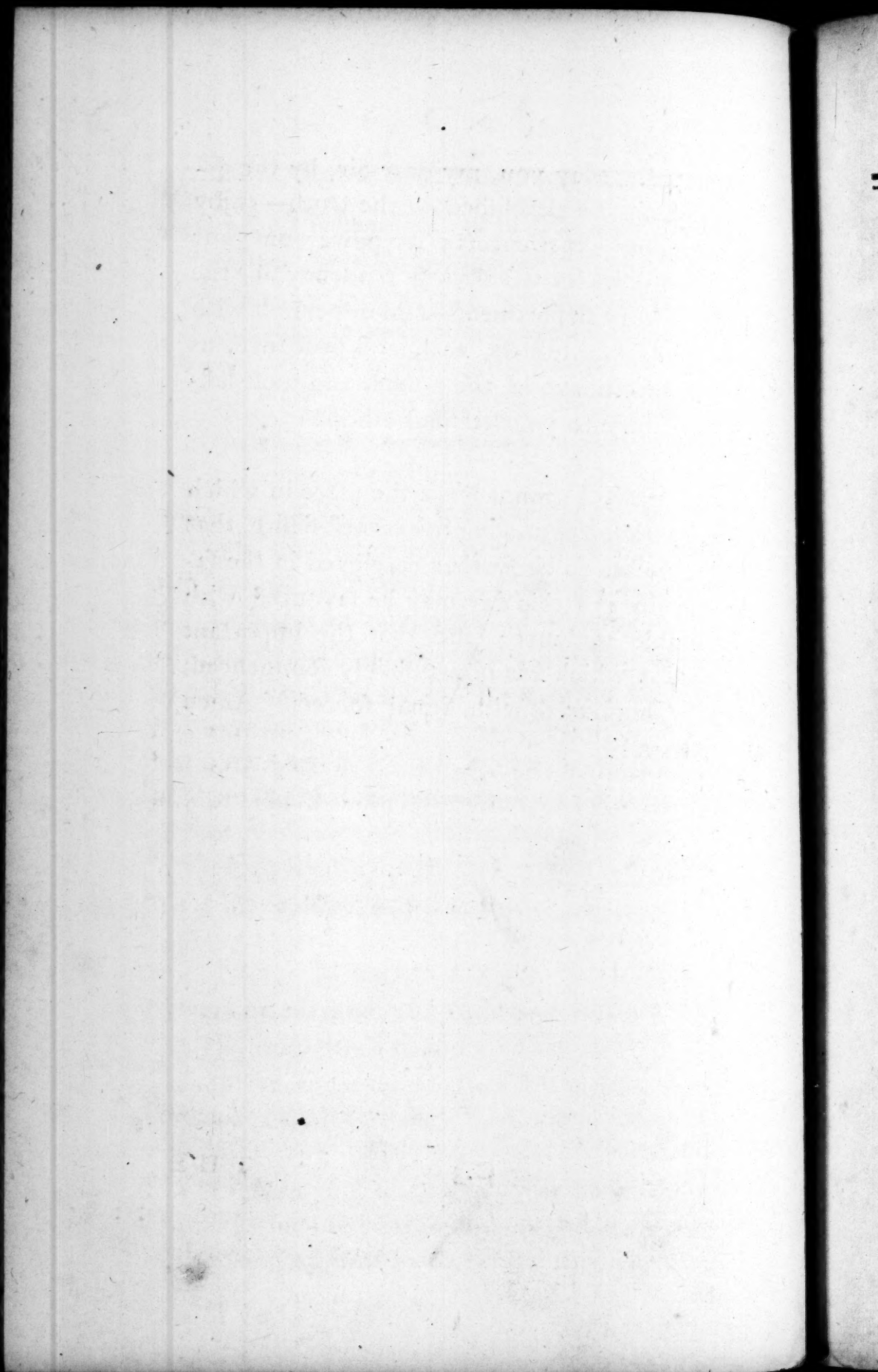
37. ' I believe that when sentence is pro-
' nounced upon the righteous and the wicked,
' the Son of God, the Mediator, shall deliver
' up the kingdom to the Father, and that God
' shall be All in All!

I return you, my much esteemed friend, many
thanks for the concise and comprehensive repre-
sentation of your Faith, which this Assembly has

now

now heard. May you, my dear Sir, by the divine blessing, be established in the truth—enjoy an increasing experience of its power on your heart—display its sanctifying tendency in the whole of your deportment—and dispense it with that steady faithfulness, zeal, and prudence, as shall be productive of the noblest and most lasting advantage to yourself and others!

And, now, I cannot leave the place in which I stand without expressing my earnest desire, that those who are to be further employed in the sacred services of this day may be favoured with all suitable assistance; and that the important connection which has now publicly commenced, may be honoured with signal success. Amen and Amen!



C H A R G E.

WHEN you, my dear Brother, and some of your friends, requested my assistance in this solemn service, the reluctance I expressed was not affected, but most sincere; however, the relation in which we stood to each other, and the real regard I have for you, have induced me to comply with what custom has made the duty of a pastor, and at the same time to shew you and your friends, that my profession of love to you is not in word only.

The text of scripture I shall read to you is in

ACTS XX. 27.

FOR I HAVE NOT SHUNNED TO DECLARE UNTO
YOU ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD.

THESE are the words of the Apostle Paul, who is a noble pattern of ministerial diligence, faithfulness, and prudence. Perhaps you will say, 'his remote superiority of attainment,

‘ annihilates me.’ Alas ! my Brother, who among us can bear to be compared with him, without perceiving that we are at a very humbling distance from his example ?

He who made Paul what he was, can make you an able minister of the New Testament, and qualify you, both as to gifts and grace, to fill that niche He has ordained you to occupy. The solemnities of this day, the arduous and various duties you are engaging to perform, combined with a sense of your own insufficiency, may almost overwhelm you. Be of good courage, always look at duties in connection with the promises which insure ability to perform them ; “ Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the “ end of the world,” will lighten darkness, give strength to the weak and courage to the timid.

My design is to offer for your direction, from this passage of scripture ; First, the subject of the Apostle’s ministry, *the counsel of God*. Secondly, shew when a minister may be said to declare *the whole counsel of God* ; and, Thirdly, caution you against those things which usually occasion ministers to *shun* a full declaration of God’s counsel.

The *counsel of God* was the subject of Saint Paul’s ministry, and it is the theme of every true teacher

teacher of Christianity, and it must be your's; not in the sense it was Paul's; he was under the extraordinary guidance of the Spirit of God, and knew in a manner suited to his designation, and peculiar to the apostolic age, the designs, thoughts, and most secret resolutions of God, relative to that kingdom which was to be erected and established in the world by the Gospel.

The expression, *counsel of God*, in the text, must be understood to mean, the revealed will of God concerning the way of salvation, through the mediation of Jesus Christ. It is in Christ we obtain an inheritance, being "predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," *Eph. i. 11*. This counsel revealed, directed the faith, worship and obedience of the writer of *Psalms lxxiii. 28*. This counsel the Pharisees rejected, *Luke vii. 30*. When I remind you that the doctrine of salvation by Christ is the prominent subject of revelation, it is not meant you should insist on that to the exclusion of the Law, which is a necessary part of God's counsel. The Law is the dark ground on which the Gospel is displayed with advantage; until it has convinced by its purity and condemned by its authority, the sinner will not receive Christ as he is offered in the Gospel. Here I need not enlarge; for in the good Confession you have just made before
these

these witnesses, you have promised to make the counsel of God the subject of your future ministrations in this church.

You will bear with me while I farther remark, that the will of God relative to the salvation of sinners by Christ alone, is of the highest importance; because it is the only *instrument of his power*, in beginning and carrying on the purposes of his grace in the heart. “ I am not ashamed
“ of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of
“ God unto salvation, to every one that believ-
“ eth, unto the Jew first, and also to the Greek,”
Rom. i. 16. At the first introduction of Christianity, this was eminently illustrated: when fishermen from the lake of Gennesareth (not orators from Greece or Rome) were the agents chosen to overcome, by declaring the counsel of God—the power of magistrates—the prejudices of the people—the craft of priests and the subtilty of philosophers. The doctrine of the cross is the grand engine for throwing down all opposition, because the Spirit of God always has and will attend the dispensation of it to the end of time.

The design of the Gospel is to change men's views, tempers and lives. Not by the excellence of its precepts, or the weight of its exhortations, or the promise of rewards: but by convincing men of their guilt, blindness and impotence,

by inculcating the necessity of pardon, supernatural light and assistance, and actually promising and conveying them. The Gospel did at the beginning and always will prove its own divinity by its efficacy. The choice of any other subject will be like combating a lion with a wooden sword. To break hard hearts, and to heal and bind up those which are broken, are the ends to be aimed at by a Christian Minister; and they can never be effected, but by the sword and balm contained in the Law and Gospel, applied to the respective conditions of men in a dependance on the Holy Ghost.

Secondly, When may a minister be said to declare all the counsel of God?

When he applies to the right source, in the beginning and progress of his course of duty. He must look to God and be *in his counsel*, before he can declare it. Paul did not obtain his ministerial ability at the feet of Gamaliel. Nor will any modern preacher be qualified, to give full proof that his ministry is of God, by sitting at the feet of Dr. Owen, Gill, or Priestley.

I have a high sense of the value of academical preparations in their proper place. Moses retired into the land of Midian, John the baptist into the wilderness, Jesus Christ lived in the privacy
of

of Nazareth, and his apostles were three years in a state of pupilage previous to their public service in the church. But when an undue stress is laid on human means of preparation: God in his Providence corrects the mistake, which even good people are liable to fall into; by making it appear that human without divine endowments, are like a heavy club in the hand of a weak man, useless. Men with academic accoutrements and honours achieve no victories; while the man called out of obscurity, and unequipped in the estimation of the wise and prudent, with his sling and stone, the weapons of victorious grace, demolishes the strong holds of satan, and brings subjects from his empire into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Stand in God's counsel, if you desire to declare it. Be not a copyist, call no man master, study the scriptures for yourself. By fervent prayer, ask for a minister's *heart* as well as *head*. What success may you not then expect, when it is said of false prophets, Jer. xxiii. 22. "But
 " if they had stood in my counsel, and had
 " caused my people to hear my words, then
 " they should have turned them from their evil
 " way and from the evil of their doings?"

A minister regards the example in the text, when he preaches the Gospel *proportionally*. Truths have a settled comparative relation. Do
 not

not select those parts only which you can shine in the discussion of. Paul "kept back nothing "that was profitable," ver. 20. The epistles teach you that the practical parts of religion must be considered more at large than the doctrinal. The foundation must be laid, but he who confines all his labour to that part of the structure, will never have a house in which he may comfortably live himself, or to accommodate his friends. He, and those who hear him, will be defective in personal and relative religion, both with respect to piety towards God and charity to man. The beauteous majesty of the superstructure must be seen in all its comely proportions. 2 Tim. ii. 15. "Study to shew thyself "approved unto God, a workman that needeth "not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word "of truth."

The preacher who would imitate Paul must state the Gospel *scripturally*. Not in the military way, or according to party modes, nor in technical phraseology. The scripture is liberal, yet not without a distinct meaning. While you avoid the narrowness of the mere system-monger, do not become ambiguous and vague in your mode of expression. Scorn the dastardly and hypocritical conduct of those who will use scripture phrases, to conceal what erring integrity will avow. To use the *terms, Divine Person,*

son, Atonement, Holy Spirit, Regeneration, and at the same time to deny the *things*; will never please any, even of your fellow creatures, but the thoughtless, or those who by licentious thinking are arrived at sceptical indifference about all religious sentiment whatever. " We have renounced the
 " hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in
 " craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but, by manifestation of the truth,
 " commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." 2 Cor. iv. 2.

Which leads me to observe again, that the counsel of God must be declared *faithfully*. Not by personally attacking from the pulpit any one; this is seldom done, but when the preacher is angry, then he is tempted (which is highly criminal) to make the Gospel the vehicle of his unhallowed resentment. Let what you advance apply to persons absent as well as present, and then however close your address may be, no one can be justly offended. Call every thing by its proper name. Enter into the detail of practical subjects or you may generalize every thing away. Meet your hearers, at their entrance into every dangerous path, with a pointed application of the counsel of God to their particular case. Convey, if possible, to the minds of your auditory, the impression of this sentiment, when you stand up to preach, ' I am not come to meet
 ' your

‘ your vanity, by a desire to shine before you; not
 ‘ to flatter you or feed a corrupt taste: but I am
 ‘ come honestly to deliver my message as in the
 ‘ presence of Him who sees all actions in their
 ‘ motives.’

Finally, a minister has declared the whole counsel of God when he can invite scrutiny and obtain a general suffrage in favour of his fidelity. The text is an appeal to those who had heard Paul preach either in public or private, for he had gone from house to house, not for the purposes of conviviality, but to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. “ Wherefore I take you to
 “ record, this day, that I am pure from the
 “ blood of all men. For I have not shunned to
 “ declare all the counsel of God.” Happy minister! who at the close of life, can challenge scrutiny, and like holy Samuel can say, “ Be-
 “ hold I am old and gray-headed, and my sons
 “ are with you; and I have walked before you
 “ from my child-hood unto this day. Behold
 “ here I am, witness against me before the Lord
 “ and before his anointed; whose ox have I
 “ taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom
 “ have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed?
 “ or of whose hand have I received any bribe
 “ to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will re-
 “ store it you. And they said, Thou hast not
 “ defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither
 “ hast

“ hast thou taken ought of any man’s hand,”
 1 Sam. xii. 3, 4. “ I have coveted no man’s fil-
 “ ver or gold, or apparel,” said Paul, v. 33.

Thirdly, I proceed to caution you against those things which occasion ministers to *shun* a declaration of *all the counsel of God*.

We must view with pleasure good beginnings. To persevere and end well, are hard of performance, because many things, unforeseen, arise to divert from the narrow path of duty.

Carnal prudence and false courtesy, have occasioned not a few to shun a full declaration of the truth. You are a minister, among those who have separated from the established church. Separatists, especially where there is competition (as in London) are in danger of using carnal policy to get and keep hearers. The temper which allows cunning management with this view, will be accompanied with strong temptations to veil the sanctity and bend the uncomplying precepts of the Gospel.

Many Dissenters in London, expect their teachers to visit them, as *acquaintances*; it is as a *minister*, he ought both to pay, and receive visits. This would prevent partiality to the rich in the discharge of pastoral duty. Policy and politeness

ness dictate the expedience of frequenting the houses of the opulent; and he must be a man of firm virtue indeed, who by their hospitality, and well directed civilities, is not softened down, and induced to adopt a system of accommodation, with worldly maxims; than which nothing is more perilous. Will he faithfully reprove the sins of omission at least, if not of commission, which, to his great mortification, he will find in families, where he hoped better things; rather will he not endeavour to persuade himself that he satisfies his duty, when he touches lightly the consciences of such offenders? Will he not shun pushing the sword of the spirit to the hilt?

Mercenary motives, cause many to shun a declaration of the whole truth. A bare maintenance, by what appears a life of leisure, may prove a temptation to the indolent any where. Comparatively in London only, can motives of gain operate on Dissenting ministers; the liberality of their congregations in this city, places the generality of them, in circumstances very superior, in point of emolument, to the laborious clergy in the establishment. You may be very distant in your present feelings, from the influence of worldly profit, by your spiritual engagements, being an unconnected man. But God who "setteth the solitary in families," in due
D time,

time, may give us an opportunity of congratulating you, on the possession of "a fruitful vine" and olive "plants, round your table." The wants of a family are very numerous, new situations call forth new passions, we know little of ourselves in the absence of temptation. Human nature has a strong tendency to degenerate. Watch against the inordinate "love of money" "which is the root of all evil." 'You may' (as one observes) 'very conscientiously, take the wages of your work, while you maintain a distinct consciousness, that you would do the work, without the wages.' Always avoid speaking the good things of God with a view to get the good things of the world.

Idleness, is another occasion of a partial ministry. A pious Bishop once observed, 'Ministers are compared to fishermen because they should always be either fishing, or mending their nets.' A common mirror, shows us all at once, and an earthly ambassador often understands his instruction on reading them once. The glass of the Gospel frequently looked at intensely will discover, new glories in the Saviour: and the instructions given to the ministers of reconciliation, are gradually unfolded. A true servant of Christ, is always learning and teaching what he learns. He is slothful, who confines his public teaching to a repetition of discourses, com-

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posed

posed in the early part of life. Sermons should be fresh, from reality, that is, made to suit, the existing state of things, in the congregation. Besides, the counsel of God in the scriptures, is connected, with the daily acts of His providential government. A watchful improvement of this connection, as it is progressively discovered, will make your addresses, interesting and useful.

Remember, you are to labor in the vineyard, not, fill yourself with grapes, and tread down the vines. Those who trifle, saunter, gossip, sensualize, and doze, their time away, cannot declare the whole counsel of God. Take care that satan does not employ you, in that, which is as bad, or worse, than doing nothing. To allude to the whale fishery, he will throw out a tub for you to play with. Novelties in theology, in politics, he will feed your mind and fill your conversation with, nine-day wonders, yea he will persuade you to be a magnetizer, any thing to divert you from the great work of winning souls, by a declaration of the counsel of God.

To conclude, make a business of remedying your own defects. Ministers are accustomed, to think, so much, what others should do, as almost to forget, to bestow any thoughts of that kind upon themselves. Press forward, towards higher,

personal attainments. Exercise grace as well as gifts in your ministry. Tremble to think how much of the animation, in public duties, is mechanical.

Remedy your own defects, or in composing sermons, you will reject some scriptures and explain away the meaning of others. When the preacher finds his *own sin* in the text, there is danger of his paring it down to his own standard. Should the minister of the pulpit, condemn the minister in society—Your hearers will say, ‘faith the preacher this of himself, or of some other man?’ If they omit the sarcasm, “Physician heal thyself,” your allowed defects will be considered as a comment on your public instructions, and it will be said, ‘He does not mean near so much as his language expresses, these hard sayings which demand rigid morality, are to be understood with such limitations, as may prevent our deficiencies, from making us uneasy, *’Tis the professional manner of the pulpit.*’

Out of this vigilant caution will arise the magnanimous resolution of the apostle, when speaking of his sufferings, ver. 24. “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I

“ have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the
 “ Gospel of the grace of God.”

Let none of the things you have been cautioned against move you; not carnal prudence, mistaken courtesy, avarice, indolence, nor its attendants, concupiscible affections, which have destroyed the usefulness and reputation, if not damned the souls, of many popular preachers. St. Paul was animated by a believing regard to the *end*, and was ambitious above all things to “ *finish his course with joy.*” Hear what he says, in the concluding scene of life, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

“ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my
 “ course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth
 “ there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,
 “ which the Lord the righteous Judge shall
 “ give me at that day: and not to me only, but
 “ unto all them also who love his appearing.”

Yes, Paul has finished his course, and is gone to a court where no Nero thirsts for the blood of apostles. His example shews you what has been recommended to you, is not impracticable, and the example of many others also, among them, you will naturally consider your much esteemed predecessor, he finished well. And as an affectionate son you cannot but reflect on your venerable father, now thought to be at the point of death; if power remains, he is imploring a double blessing on you to-day, follow his shining track and you

will share with him the rewards of fidelity unto death. May you my dear Brother, at a very distant day, after having "endured hardness, as "a good foldier of Jesus Christ," be called off from this station with honour, and quit the well-fought field for the Palace of the great King, and have your temporary labours rewarded with everlasting rest. Amen!

THE

T H E
S E R M O N.

THE part allotted to me in the solemn service of this day, is to address a word of exhortation to the members of this society, whose prayers are now happily answered, in that *their eyes behold their pastor*, this day set over them in the Lord.—I may truly say, that I sincerely condoled with you under that painful stroke of Providence, which left you “*as sheep without a shepherd*”—But I have the pleasure now of congratulating you on account of the care and tenderness of the great Shepherd who never dies—You are called “*to sing of mercy*” as well as “*of judgment*,” and to acknowledge, that the same God “*who maketh sore bindeth up again, and that the same hands which wound make whole.*”—Without the imputation of flattery, I may be allowed, on this occasion, to mention, that spirit of love and harmony which united you during the long life and ministry of your late honoured and worthy pastor;—and which kept

you together in the bonds of union and concord, till a happy settlement has again taken place.—This must afford peculiar pleasure to all that love the Lord; to all who delight in the prosperity of Zion—And it is in a particular manner a pleasing consideration to me, as it assures me, that I shall attempt to inculcate nothing upon you, but what you are already disposed and through grace resolved to attend to, as a Christian church—As the foundation of what is now to be set before you in the name of the Lord, permit me to address you in the words of the apostle Paul,

PHIL. ii. 1, 2.

IF THERE BE THEREFORE ANY CONSOLATION IN CHRIST, IF ANY COMFORT OF LOVE, IF ANY FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT, IF ANY BOWELS AND MERCIES; FULFIL YE MY JOY, THAT YE BE LIKE-MINDED, HAVING THE SAME LOVE, BEING OF ONE ACCORD, OF ONE MIND.

WHEN it pleased God to crown the labours of Paul at Philippi, with singular success, a new source of joy was opened to him, in beholding a church planted for Christ—He rejoiced in an accession to the Redeemer's kingdom, in the prospects of the everlasting happiness of so many souls, and in so plain an evidence of the Divine approbation of his ministry.

—But

—But this was only a *partial* joy.—When experienced ministers contemplate the first impressions made on their hearers, *they rejoice with trembling*—For the reality of conversion is demonstrated by the edification and improvement, by the increasing fruitfulness and establishment, by the constancy and perseverance, of those who profess or seem to be converted.—The husbandman may be allowed a degree of joy, when in the spring he contemplates the promising appearance of his fields, his vineyards, or his orchards—But, prudence recommends that he should be temperate in his joy, till the harvest and vintage arrive to crown his hopes—So the apostle felt an earnest desire, that his hopes concerning the Philippians should be realized, in their increasing establishment in the faith, and comfort, and holiness of the Gospel.—And it is worthy of attention, in what a remarkable manner this is expressed in the preceding chapter—Such views had he of that sublime and perfect happiness which consists in the immediate vision and enjoyment of the Lord;—and such an unshaken hope and assurance of his interest in it, that he hesitated not to say, “*Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better*”—Yet, apprehending that his longer continuance in the body was conducive and even necessary to the advantage of the Philippians; he is reconciled to a longer life with all the labours, conflicts

fiets and sorrows which attended it.—What then was the object which he hoped to accomplish through the blessing of God on his further labours? It is expressed in the text—And if our hearts have any degree of Christian sensibility, we cannot but feel a considerable influence and force in the very words—“ *If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*”

Permit me to attempt

I. ‘ To illustrate that spirit which the Apostle
‘ so earnestly and affectionately recommends
‘ to the Philippians: And then,

II. ‘ To enforce it on you by the same argu-
‘ ments which the Apostle urges in address-
‘ ing them.’

I. ‘ To illustrate that amiable and excellent
‘ spirit which the Apostle so earnestly and affec-
‘ tionately recommends to the Philippians,—
“ *That ye be like-minded, having the same love, being*
“ *of one accord, of one mind.*”——The best critics
find it difficult to translate the original words,
without introducing a tautology; the first and
last

last clauses seeming to express the same idea. Dr. Doddridge renders the passage thus; 'That ye
' may be unanimous, maintaining the same love,
' having your souls joined together in attending
' to the one thing;' and, as far as I can judge, he has well expressed the Apostle's meaning. The substance of what is here recommended will be included in the following particulars.

1. 'It is very desirable, that the members of
' Christian churches should be unanimous in
' their attachment to the great doctrines of the
' Gospel.'—That the Apostle intended this, seems evident to me from what he had said, Chap. i. 27.
"Only let your conversation be as it becometh
"the Gospel of Christ, that whether I come and
"see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your
"affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with
"one mind, striving together for the faith of
"the Gospel." An agreement in sentiment, at least, as far as the fundamental articles of religion are concerned, is necessary to the harmony and prosperity of Christian churches. If some, for instance, conceive themselves bound to honour the Redeemer as a divine person, as "*God manifest in the flesh*," while others in the same society acknowledge him only as a creature, or even degrade him to the rank of a mere man;—if one looks to him as "*the author of eternal salvation*," and professes to build all his hopes on his atone-

atonement and righteousness, while another will own him only as a prophet, commissioned to declare the terms on which forgiveness may be obtained, and asserts, that he died, only, that by his resurrection he might assure us of a general resurrection on the last day;—such opposite sentiments leave no room for union and harmony in the society in which they prevail, but must necessarily occasion endless discord and contention. But how is that unanimity of sentiment to be obtained, which is so necessary as the basis of Christian fellowship?—Not by servile subjection to *human authority*, or by calling any man *our master upon earth*; for as different men will chuse *different masters*, such guides will lead them to different and contradictory sentiments. Let all resolve to regard *Christ alone as their master*, and to pay implicit submission to his dictates;—let all determine to take *the Bible alone as the rule of their faith and practice*;—let them study the scriptures with a *meek and humble spirit*, and accompany all their researches with *earnest prayer* for the illumination of the Holy Spirit;—and especially, let them search after the truth, not as *critics and philosophers*, but as *convinced sinners*, whose grand concern is, “*what they shall do to be saved*;”—and I have no doubt but the enquiry will issue in such a harmony of sentiment as will lay a foundation for Christian fellowship. Nor is this a mere conjecture, but it is supported by
undoubted

undoubted facts.—Lutherans and Calvinists hold different sentiments respecting various articles; but the pious Lutheran has no controversy with the pious Calvinist as to those points of doctrine which constitute the foundation of a believer's hope. May you, therefore, my Christian friends, be blest with that experimental knowledge of the truth, which will unite your souls in the sweet bonds of concord and love!—Which leads me to add,

2. ' That it is desirable and necessary that the members of Christian societies should be united together in mutual love'—" *having,*" ' or maintaining,' " *the same love.*"——There is nothing that Christ has inculcated on his disciples more frequently or earnestly than brotherly love—" *A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another—And by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.*" The religion of Christians is founded in the immense compassion and love of our God and Saviour; and all the blessings belonging to it are the free emanations of eternal love. If this divine religion has obtained possession of our hearts, it must inspire them with the genuine sentiments of love. They will expand with compassion and benevolence to the whole human race, and with ardent desires, that, as far as is consistent with the will of God, they may

may be all blessed with the knowledge of the Saviour. They will feel a peculiar endearment and an union of heart towards all the children of God, wherever dispersed over the face of the whole earth. But when it embraces an object so extensive, Christian love can exert itself only in *affectionate wishes* and *ardent prayers*. There is therefore a more peculiar sphere in which it is to operate and manifest all its proper fruits; and that is, *the sacred individual community of which each believer is an actual member*. Various and important are the kind and faithful offices which sincere love will incline us to perform, according to the different situation and circumstances of its objects. To all that appear to bear the image of Christ, it will pay the willing tribute of esteem and affection. Divested of envy and jealousy, it will not refuse the honour due to those, who by eminency in grace, gifts, or talents, are capacitated for higher degrees of usefulness; and free from the influence of pride, it will manifest a meek and condescending attention to those who occupy the lowest place.—Especially, love will fill the heart with the tenderest sympathy towards those who are exercised with inward or outward trials; and dispose it to minister all the assistance possible for their comfort. In a word, when this divine principle operates in a proper manner, the church is as one body animated with one soul—It is an object

ject which angels contemplate with pleasure; yea, the *Lord of angels* delights to view it, and takes up his abode in it. But it must be confessed, that there will be found many hindrances to the exercise of Christian love; from the many imperfections which remain in the purest societies on earth; yet as far as we feel the influence of redeeming love, our concern will be "*not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.*" I add,

3. 'That it is desirable and necessary for a Christian church to be united in the pursuit of one great end, of one general interest.'——

All human societies profess to regard some object as the end for which they are associated. But a Christian church is more sacred in its nature, and formed for nobler and more important ends. Its plan and constitution are not left to be settled by the fancy or wisdom of men; but are ordained by the great Author of our religion. When Christians associate together in church fellowship, it is not to be regarded merely as an act of free choice; but as a solemn acknowledgement of the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is not left to our free determination, whether we connect ourselves to a Christian church or not; but our allegiance to Christ binds it upon us, as an indispensable duty. And when we resolve to enter into those sacred bonds, we are not at liberty
to

to propose our own ends, but must adopt those which he has appointed. And it is evident, that the harmony and prosperity of a church will greatly depend, on the members having their views directed to one and the same object. What this great end should be, we are sufficiently instructed in the New Testament. The first and principal end is, ‘ a public and solemn acknowledgment of God and the Redeemer.’ In commencing actual members of a church of Christ, we profess before men and angels to take the Lord for our God.—We confess his authority as our great proprietor, and chuse him as our portion.—We acknowledge the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.—We profess to build all our hopes on his atonement and righteousness, and to receive his Gospel as the supreme law of our conduct. Such are our acknowledgements when we unite in public prayer; when we sit under the ministration of the Gospel; and especially, when we attend on the solemnities of the table of the Lord. In connexion with this, ‘ the mutual edification of Christians is the end of church fellowship.’—It is the will of Christ that his disciples should unite in society; that each individual should receive advantage from his union with the whole body. In the spirit of Christian love they are to watch over each other with a kind and holy jealousy; with gentleness and tenderness they are

are to warn and admonish one another, when there is danger of their falling into any thing injurious to their souls or dishonourable to Christ. The mature experience of established Christians should contribute to the confirmation and improvement of such as are weak and wavering; and especially, the utmost endeavours should be used for the healing and recovery of those who are wounded and fallen.—And besides all this, ‘ Christian churches should aim at ‘ the advancement of the interest and kingdom ‘ of Christ in the world.’ To promote this great end, it is incumbent on them to *be witnesses for God*; that by the excellency of their spirit and the uniformity of their conduct, they may shew the reality and amiableness of religion. This is of the first importance; and when professors fail in it, very little success can be expected to accompany any exertions they may use in another way. But when, in this respect, they act up to their proper character, *they are “ lights in the world;”* they are “ *the salt of the earth.*” Then, with the utmost consistency, they will shew their zeal ‘ in the support and ‘ maintenance of a Gospel ministry;’ and it will be not **only** their desire to have the bread of life broken to themselves, but to encourage their ministers in their endeavours to gain new subjects to the Lord Jesus. Such are the ends to be promoted by Christian fellowship. Let it be added,

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4. ‘ That

4. ' That it is desirable and necessary, for the
 ' members of Christian churches to be united
 ' and harmonious in their zealous endeavours
 ' and vigorous exertions to promote these im-
 ' portant ends.'—This is evidently included
 in the word which the Apostle uses (*συνψυχοι*)
 and which Doddridge connects with the last
 clause; ' Having your souls joined together in
 ' attending to the one thing.' I need not in-
 form you that the strength of every society lies
 in the union and harmony of its members; even
 the most powerful kingdom when disunited and
 torn into factions, becomes an easy prey to its
 enemies. It should therefore be the concern of
 Christian churches in a peculiar manner to "*fol-*
 "*low the things which make for peace,*" and which
 will promote a strict union among themselves.
 And this should so much the more engage their
 attention, as it is the policy of their grand adver-
 sary to stir up the contrary spirit.—*Divide and*
reign, is the favourite maxim of the devil; and
 it is unnecessary to say, what evils it has occa-
 sioned in many churches. As, therefore, you
 wish to see the great ends of your church-state
 promoted, study to cherish and confirm a spirit
 of union and harmony among yourselves. And
 in order to this, "*for sake not the assembling of your-*
 "*selves together;*" but be constant in your attend-
 ance on the sacred ordinances appointed for
 your edification. Uniting in worship, as one
 family

family nourished at the same table, will greatly tend to promote an union of hearts. Nor let it suffice that you attend punctually on the Sabbath; but take heed not to neglect your more private meetings as a church. Alas! of our church meetings, how little remains beyond the name and the shadow! Brethren, *it ought not to be thus*; nay, I will say, if sacred zeal and Christian love had their due influence on the hearts of professors, *it would not be thus*. And it would be of advantage, if the members of the same society did keep up a more friendly intimacy with one another. This would operate insensibly to unite their hearts, by a mutual communication of the pleasant or painful occurrences they meet with in their pilgrimage. Sirs, Are you not brethren in the best bonds? Why, then, should you keep at such a distance? But it is peculiarly necessary to guard against those things which tend to disunite. Be peculiarly cautious ‘to give no cause of offence. ‘Count it better to be precipitated into the ‘depths of the sea with a mill-stone at your ‘neck, than to offend the weakest Christian,’ the most obscure of the children of God. At the same time, ‘take heed of being too ready ‘to take offence.’ When God is not offended, judge it better patiently to *bear the cross*, than to disturb the harmony of the church by needless complaints. Thus united, your zeal will

be directed to one grand end, and your mutual endeavours will aim at the promotion of the same glorious cause; yea, a holy emulation will possess you, who shall do most for the glory of God, the honour of the Redeemer, and the interest of his church. Such is the amiable spirit which the Apostle recommends to the Philippians; and with such a disposition, it is my sincere prayer that you all may be inspired.—Permit me, therefore,

II. ‘ To enforce it upon you by the same arguments with which the Apostle urges it on them.’

I address you, brethren, as Christians, as sincere believers in Jesus Christ; “if” indeed “*you have tasted that the Lord is gracious,*” the considerations now to be laid before you will not fail of influencing your minds without the aid of eloquence—
 “*If there be any consolation in Christ; if any comfort of love; if any fellowship of the Spirit; if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye my joy.*” Here no less than five arguments are urged, and it would be difficult to decide which of them is the most cogent.—May you feel the force of their united influence!

I. “*If there be any consolation in Christ.*”—Surely it is not a doubtful question with you, whether
 “*there*

“ *there be any consolation in Christ;*” every Christian acknowledges him by the same title under which ancient saints looked for him as “ *the Consolation of Israel.*” Sin has removed us far from the springs of divine comfort, and opened the sluices through which wretchedness and misery have entered and overflowed the world. What did you feel, Christians, when a conviction of sin was planted in your consciences? When your crimes were set before you in all their number and aggravations; when guilt oppressed your souls as an intolerable load; when you felt yourselves bound in the chains of your sins; when an offended God appeared to frown awfully upon you, and the dreadful gulph of misery gaped to receive you;—in that situation, what comfort could you derive from yourselves or from the whole world? But you heard the voice of Christ addressing you, “ *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” You looked to him, and saw in his hands *a sealed pardon for all your sins*;—*grace all sufficient* to deliver you from your sins, and to restore you to the image of God;—*a crown of life and glory*, instead of that eternal death which you dreaded. From Christ you derived your first consolation; and from the same source you derive it still. Now, the consideration of this enforces the disposition which has been now recommended. For, consider,

what sentiments must possess the soul which has daily recourse to this fountain of consolation? Will not a sense of its obligation to him inspire it with an ardent zeal for his glory? Can we enjoy the blessedness which he imparts, and not feel our hearts kindled into benevolence and love? All who drink at this fountain must be inspired with the same spirit, and walk in the same steps. But should we neglect to cultivate this disposition, it will necessarily exclude us from enjoying the consolation which is in Christ. The privileges of Christians arise from grace; but are actually conferred only on those whose hearts are prepared by the Spirit of God to receive them: So that those professors who allow themselves in a spirit opposite to that which the Apostle recommends, must be strangers to this sacred consolation; nay, it is the tendency of such a spirit to lead the world to believe, that there is no reality in those enjoyments which are said to be connected with the religion of Jesus. You would not encourage such an unjust reflexion on the Gospel; and therefore labour to cultivate this amiable spirit.

2. "*If there be any comfort of love.*"—This might be understood with reference to the *love of God* flowing through Christ to impart happiness to the soul: And then it may be said, 'If indeed
' it be a truth, that the blessed God grants to
his

‘ his people a real and sensible enjoyment of his
 ‘ unspeakable love, together with the rich fruits
 ‘ which arise from it; and if this divine love
 ‘ can impart any comfort to the soul which
 ‘ tastes of it; as you would manifest the truth
 ‘ of your interest in so vast a privilege, prove it
 ‘ by possessing this spirit of unity and love.’ But
 this in a great measure coincides with the former
 argument; and therefore I rather suppose
 that *the love of the brethren* is intended. Here
 then the Apostle appeals to Christians, whether
 their comfort does not in a great measure arise
 from the kind returns of mutual love. The
 least degree of reflexion must convince us, that
 when a spirit of discord and variance and hatred
 enters, as far as it prevails it is the bane of hap-
 piness. To the enjoyment of happiness the first
 requisite is a sense of “ *the peace of God;*” and in
 the next place, *peace with our brethren* is neces-
 sary. When, upon searching through all the
 recesses of our hearts, we find none of the angry
 passions tolerated, but the whole soul under the
 influence of benevolence and kindness; I appeal
 to every Christian if such a spirit must not afford
 peculiar comfort. It is an evidence that we “ *are*
 “ *partakers of a divine nature.*” And this comfort
 will be greatly augmented in meeting the re-
 turns of unfeigned love from our brethren. To
 receive undoubted evidence that our welfare is
 no less dear to them, than theirs is to us, cannot

but fill our hearts with peculiar pleasure. Those, indeed, who are governed by the spirit of the world, may imagine, that an obstinate pursuit of their own interest will be most to their advantage; but religion will teach us, *that to love, and to be beloved*, will more certainly lead to true comfort. Christianity produces a noble generosity of spirit; and the spirit which is formed after its maxims must have a peculiar relish for the comfort of love. But it is very evident, that to enjoy this comfort, we must maintain the disposition which has been recommended.

3. "*If there be any fellowship of the Spirit.*"—This is a branch of that solemn benediction, with which, after the example of St. Paul, we dismiss our assemblies—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you!"—"The fellowship" or communion "*of the Spirit,*" includes the communication he makes of divine benefits to the soul, and the gracious influence by which he acts upon it. The blessings which impart comfort to a believer spring originally from the love of an all-sufficient God; they flow through the channel of the mediation of Christ; and are actually communicated by the operations of the Holy Spirit. Thus we derive that pardon, which is the only balm for the wounds of a guilty soul; thus alone can we be assured that
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God is reconciled to us, and that we are interested in his love; thus we derive that influence by which our corruptions and sins are subdued, and the graces and virtues essential to Christianity are implanted in our hearts; thus we obtain strength proportioned to our several duties, and supports under the pressure of our various trials. In a word, it is by the Holy Spirit a believer is introduced to the seat of God, so as to enjoy the precious fruits of communion with him—"For through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Now, consider, how great is the privilege of those who enjoy "*the fellowship of the Spirit!*" What springs of consolation are opened, of which they may freely drink? Can we form an idea of means so conducive to real happiness? And on the other hand reflect, how wretched is the state of such professors as are strangers to so divine a blessing? They have, it is true, the name of Christians; but without the fellowship of the Spirit, they are destitute of the essence of vital Christianity. They cannot bear the fruits which spring from grace, and which God beholds with approbation. They cannot represent religion in its beauty and amiableness; nor can they possess those sacred enjoyments which it is ordained to afford. Their souls, instead of resembling "*a watered garden,*" are like the parched desert and the barren heath. My Brethren, I trust you have
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a just sense of the importance of the "*fellowship of the Spirit*;" if so, then study to manifest its proper fruits.

4. "*If there be any bowels and mercies.*"—This argument also may be understood in so comprehensive a manner as to include the *immense compassions of our God and Saviour*. The Apostle may be supposed to remind them, what infinite mercy was manifested by the Lord, when, instead of dooming sinners to certain destruction, he formed a gracious purpose and planned a glorious scheme for their salvation;—what pity touched the heart of the Son of God, when, "*being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;*"—what mercy they obtained when by divine grace effectually "*called to the fellowship of Christ,*" and to an actual interest in all the blessings purchased with his blood;—and what tenderness and long suffering the Lord had exercised towards them from the time they first professed to devote themselves to his service. And if we have any just apprehensions of these bowels and mercies, we must be concerned to discover such a spirit and conduct as will obtain the approbation of our God and Saviour—But I rather
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conceive the appeal is made to those principles of compassion and tenderness which dwell in all regenerate hearts. If there are any tender sentiments remaining which were originally implanted by the great author of your nature;—and if there are principles more excellent and divine communicated to you by the spirit of grace; let all the bowels and mercies you are possessed of engage your attention to this exhortation. If you feel any melting compassion for a world involved in sin and misery, cultivate that spirit which will recommend religion to them as the source of happiness;—if you possess a heart capable of melting in sympathy, exercise your tenderness to your Christian Brethren by participating their burdens and sorrows;—in a word, if “*there are any bowels and mercies,*” let your minister experience the effect of them. You have called him to a very arduous and important service; and all the affection and kindness you can shew him cannot exempt him from many burdens and discouragements with which it is attended. God forbid, that any thing in you should augment the difficulties he has to struggle with!—But this introduces the last argument, viz.

5. “*Fulfil ye my joy.*” And, here I am more particularly to plead with you, on the behalf of our dear Brother now solemnly recognized as

your pastor. You have heard the charge addressed to him; and are sensible that the work he has entered on is great, arduous and important. In a sense, indeed, *he is your servant*, because his time, his talents and labours, are devoted to your edification; but, he comes to you in a higher character, as *the minister of Jesus Christ*; commissioned to preach the everlasting Gospel, and to administer its sacred seals, in his name and by his authority. 'Tis not your call that constitutes him a minister; you have only testified, you could no more than testify, that you believe, the great Head of the church has qualified and appointed him to the office—"Receive him *therefore in the Lord*"—Respect the character he sustains, "*and esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake.*"—Remember, he is to "*watch for your souls, as one that must give an account, that he may do it with joy and not with grief.*" But I cannot express the duty you owe him in more proper or significant words, than those immediately before us;—*fulfil ye his joy.* The unanimity and affection with which you have called him to the pastoral office must certainly afford him peculiar pleasure. But the joy he feels in entering on his work under such pleasing appearances, leaves him exposed to jealousy and fear, lest the prospects which are now so bright should hereafter become clouded. Therefore, let it be your endeavour to improve
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and *complete his joy*. I am persuaded, there is no necessity for me to use arguments to convince you, that it is your duty to be liberal in your contributions for his support; I have no doubt but *of yourselves you are forward to it*. I trust also, I need not remind you, that it is your duty ardently, affectionately, and constantly to pray for him, that in all his ministrations, he may come unto you, "*in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ*." If when "*Paul planted, and Apollos watered, it was God who gave the increase*;" you cannot expect that the labours of your minister should be successful, but as they are accompanied with the effectual influence of divine grace—Nor can you expect that influence to descend, but in answer to your fervent prayers. Therefore, "*Brethren pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified*." When your minister can assure himself, that you have been earnest intercessors for him at the throne of grace, he will enter the pulpit with a degree of pleasure and confidence, in hopes that the blessing of God will water his labours. But permit me to say 'That nothing can more tend 'to fulfil your pastor's joy, than to see a spirit 'of unanimity, harmony and love, prevailing 'among you.' How did Paul expect his joy to be fulfilled respecting the Philippians? "*That ye be like-minded, having the same love, being*
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“ *of one accord, of one mind.*” What pain and distress must ministers feel, when a spirit opposite to this prevails among their people? when contrary sentiments excite discord and strife and debate;—when the bonds of Christian affection are broken, and they divide into parties and factions; in a word, “ *when all seek their own and not the things which are Jesus Christ’s?*” When a minister is called to labour among such a people, what pleasure or comfort can he enjoy? His soul is pressed down with discouragement; his hands are feeble and his heart faint. But I hope and believe better things concerning you—I trust our dear Brother will have other prospects before him when he stands in this place, or breaks the bread of Christ to you at his table—I trust it will be his happiness to behold a people
 ‘ more and more confirmed in their attachment
 ‘ to the great doctrines of the Gospel;—more
 ‘ closely united together in the sweet bonds of
 ‘ Christian love;—joined in pursuing one great
 ‘ end, one general interest; and harmonious in
 ‘ their zealous endeavours to promote it.’—Such a sight will fill his heart with gladness, and sweeten the most painful labours he is called to.
 —Long may you and he enjoy it; and may it be a pledge of still higher joy and pleasure, when he meets with you at the bar of Christ! As the conclusion of this address, I can find no words more suitable than those with which it was begun—

gun — “ *If there be therefore any consolation in
“ Christ ; if any comfort of love ; if any fellowship
“ of the Spirit ; if any bowels and mercies ; fulfil
“ ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same
“ love, being of one accord, of one mind.” Amen!*

F I N I S.

